

City of Lincoln
Telecommunications/Cable Television Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes – January 23, 2014

Members Present: Paul Barnett, Steve Eggland, Matt Hansen, Ed Hoffman, Linda Jewson, Jim Johnson, Laurie Thomas Lee, John Neal, Dara Troutman

City Staff: Diane Gonzolas, Steve Huggenberger, Jamie Wenz, David Young

Representatives of Time Warner Cable: Jarad Falk

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by chair Ed Hoffman. Board members and guests introduced themselves.

Gonzolas introduced Jamie Wenz as the new director of the City PEG channels. Bill Luxford has had to retire for health reasons; he is still working with the City part-time but was unable to continue as director. Wenz was the top applicant and has been amazing. Many board members know Wenz from his previous job as Public Access Coordinator with Time-Warner Cable (TWC). Hoffman welcomed Wenz and asked for a brief bio. Wenz said that prior to moving to the City he had been at TWC for eight years as Public Access Coordinator, in addition to managing videoproduction dept for Lincoln and other jobs. He worked at channels 10/11 for several years before moving to TWC, and in North Platte before that. For the City, he is responsible for Channel 5, and 10Health. They also help coordinate the educational access channel, Channel 80. They coordinate meetings such as City Council, County Commission, and other meetings. They also partner up with other City boards.

Gonzolas introduced David Young from Public Works. Young is the Right of Way manager for Fiber Installation. Young said that in 2012 the City was putting in streets around the arena; at that time the City decided to put fiber into the streets while they were working on it. This saves money and makes community broadband available in the downtown area. We have signed a couple of leases for access to the system, and are looking at others. There is currently 250 miles of conduit. Gonzales will add David to the information sheet.

New Business

Expanded Board Duties

Hoffman said that City boards are like juries; we're not necessarily expected to be experts on the technology that comes before us; our job is to be committed to the City and to seeing things done on a reasonable basis. Huggenberger said that there are no specific duties; the ordinance leaves the description rather broad. Today he will talk about what we are doing in various areas.

Cable Television: We have one franchise through 2020; will probably start negotiations about 2017. We have had another company inquire about a franchise; no further information available at this time.

Cell Towers: If a tower is located on City property, the City is the owner of the tower. If someone comes to the City and requests a tower, the City decides. No requirement for stealth application. Primarily monopoles. When towers are built, they are three-company towers: the first company gets a rent abatement for the first three years, the other two have to pay. All the companies pay rental.

City conduit system: Young is the primary person managing that. Primarily four inch conduit, but not exclusively. There are some conditions: We lease as we have space. There are two current tenants: NebraskaLink and UNL. Huggenberger expects there will be other tenants before long. We want broadband to be more available to businesses and residents. This provides significant revenue, and provides relief from constant excavation. The Mayor would like to see the Universal Service Funds used for broadband expansion in an urban environment. We have talked to the Public Service Commission about changing the current usage, which currently focuses on smaller communities. Lee asked if that is a federal issue. Huggenberger said that states have quite a bit of discretion in how it's used. Huggenberger said that we would probably work together with a private company. There are statutory Limitations: political subdivisions are prohibited from providing broadband services except in very limited circumstances. We can lease dark fiber but not lighted fiber.

Telecommunication Occupation Taxes: Huggenberger said that there are people who claim that Lincoln has the highest telecommunication occupation taxes in the country; he said this is not true but he won't get into that. Any city can levy an occupation tax up to 6.25%; right now we're at 6%. We may look at some ways to increase this.

Audit: City is doing audits. We have five on the table now; 82 are left. This includes Windstream, Verizon, AT&T, Cricket, UFSingular, and a couple of others.

Hoffman asked what the conduit will be used for. Huggenberger had no guesses. Young said that inside the conduit, we have 90 miles of fiber. This is used to light up City and County buildings. Today we have 1 GB speed. We buy a 50 MB connection to the Internet. We're upgrading to 250 MB. We want to tie in more traffic signals to an intelligent transportation system. We would like to tie in water facilities too. Want to upgrade from a daisy chain to a hub and spoke ring. Five year plan for the conduit system, building one for the fiber.

Hoffman: What are the leased fibers used for? Young said that possibly cable TV could be provided over the fiber. We make it a lot easier for competing carriers to use. Young said that we use the fiber; will want to share with the State and the University.

Lee asked whether if (for example) Windstream wanted to use the conduit would they have to provide the fiber? Young said yes; the network propagates out. Huggenberger said that any audio, video service could run over it. Young said it could also handle phone service and VOIP.

TWC would normally have to build their own conduits; the fiber is only 2 dollars a foot.

Hoffman asked how many other communities have this; Huggenberger said not very many.

Young showed some cable sizes. He said the speed to market is fast.

Lee said that it's great that it covers the whole community. She thought it was just in the downtown area. Young said that when he came here it was just in the downtown area; now it's widespread.

Huggenberger said that we have a very agile group when we take on the conduit questions.

Huggenberger said that there are wireless projects; he wants Young to talk about that too.

Young said that there is spectrum that's available to the City, and a spectrum that's available to the public. We wanted to talk about wireless downtown. Wireless on P Street; extending the University wireless into downtown. Centennial Mall will have wireless. What is the value of that? We have 40,000 employees downtown; tying wireless to the mall between the Capitol and the University. We also want to tie in Civic Plaza. We would like to do that on P Street and Antelope Valley. Some people would like to see creation of a buffer area around the University. There are policy questions, including First Amendment issues. He will talk to the board about things that we're working on.

Hoffman said that his daughter is teaching English in South Korea on a Fulbright scholarship. He went to visit her, and found that they have wireless everywhere. Young said that in Scotland, Glasgow and Edinburgh have wireless that covers the whole area. It's new to communities to have a plan. Lee: There are communities that have done this, such as San Francisco. She asked what we have learned from them. Young said that if the City does it themselves it's quite expensive. We would have to build in-house if we don't have a corporate partner, so we will use a partnership. We have people in the traffic section who are learning to lay fiber. We have 3000 customers; we can get by with one engineer. We would not be able to scale that up to 180,000 customers. We want to make it cost-effective for Time Warner and other companies, so that they will not want to go anywhere. Young said that where failure has occurred it's often because the budget declines. Lee asked if access to the wireless would be free. Young said that in the parks it would probably be free. But on P Street, we would have a partner, so users would have to pay. As a community, how do we grapple with that? As a community we should make this infrastructure available. But he believes that we can find partners. How do we put wireless in the Haymarket? Troutman said that she and others have had trouble texting from Pinnacle Bank Arena; Young agreed that there had been a problem but he believes that it's fixed now and she should be able to text next time she's there.

Huggenberger said that he doesn't want this to just be the City bringing issues to the board, but board members need to bring issues to the City as well.

Lee thinks that businesses may complain if we give free wireless. Young said that if we limit users to a half hour a day or so he doesn't think that will happen. Huggenberger said that the service will be provider-neutral. Falk said that there are many communities, such as Kansas City, which were willing to give Google some concessions that others couldn't get. He appreciates that Lincoln is not playing favorites.

Hoffman asked if we limit the amount of conduit space that users can take up. Huggenberger said that we haven't had to talk about it yet.

Gonzolas said that page 4, section (b) of the Ordinance defines the duties of the board; Huggenberger reiterated that it's very broad.

Revision of Bylaws

References to the Cable Advisory Board will have to be updated to the new name. Gonzolas and Huggenberger will take a look at the bylaws and will come up with some recommendations. Huggenberger said that the Cable Advisory Board doesn't exist anymore so we can do whatever we want when writing the bylaws; they are independent of the previous bylaws.

Old Business

Resolution of Appreciation for Bill Luxford

The board voted unanimously to give Bill Luxford a resolution of appreciation for his service with the City.

Update on move of PEG channels to digital format

Falk said that there was an account number problem: there wasn't always a process to add in account numbers at the time that people signed up. If the problem is related to a digital adaptor, they are getting them. There are 4500 adaptors in Nebraska; there is not enough detail to determine how many of these are in Lincoln.

There was a question of how to get the word out. For instance, on the first day of the legislative session, NET2 wasn't where it was expected so people called NET and that caused a big spike in their phone support business.

Hoffman asked if Huggenberger has any comments for TWC. Huggenberger said that he had contacted Ann Teget to see if she could help get it figured out for his office. Falk said that people can contact either himself or Doug.

Hoffman asked if TWC can track down the account numbers. Falk said not always. Gonzolas said that the City was concerned about how many people had paid for installation, and how many people turned it back in because they thought it wouldn't work.

Young asked about the connection to the Municipal Service Center. The City and Experian both occupy that building; they need service. Who would he talk to? Falk said Brandon Schmidt; Falk will send Young the contact information.

Board Vacancies

One application has come in, a second person has expressed interest but not yet received an application. Hoffman commented that we might want to ask Art Ziegelbaum if he is interested now that the board has expanded duties.

Member Orientation

Hoffman said that we have had discussions about a member orientation, possibly at Time Warner. Gonzolas said that we will first try to fill up the board first, then will probably want to have an orientation after that. Will touch on Cable TV issues, but will probably want to concentrate on other issues.

Report from TWC

Public Access Report was distributed. Falk distributed but counted on Wenz's expertise to discuss the report. Wenz said that they have seen a decline in the programming as more people move to YouTube.

Lee asked who is doing the job that Wenz was doing; Wenz said that position is still vacant.

Report from The City

Wenz says that it's a little hard to determine things like live broadcast hours because meetings are variable length. He didn't realize that he should probably be tracking the length of the meetings until he started putting the report together. The educational channel

is going to start increasing new programming because the University is going to have students doing some shows. He invites us to come visit the studio.

Date for next meeting

Next meeting is scheduled for July 24, 2014, 4:00 p.m. in the City-County Building

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Johnson, secretary